

WORLD PICTURES

IN

CAPITALS.

BY

EDWARD TUCKERMAN POTTER
ARCHITECT.

With a Descriptive Legend

BY

HENRY COPPÉE.



PHILADELPHIA:

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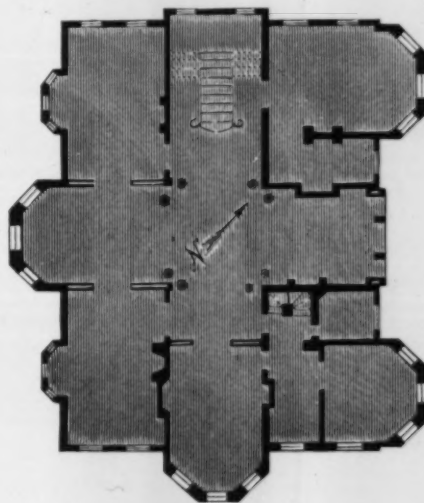
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.,

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WORLD PICTURES IN CAPITALS.

A BEAUTIFUL MANSION has been erected near the Hudson, in Dutchess County, New York, for Mr. George H. Brown: Mr. Edward T. Potter is the architect. In making the plans, an art-problem presented itself, at once practical and yet æsthetically suggestive. It was this: two halls traverse the building at right angles, and form thus a large open space in the centre: to support the upper story in that enlarged central space was the problem of strength, and this the artist solved by placing eight columns of black walnut for the supports: it was a very natural thought to beautify these, that they might be an enduring monument of taste.

Placing above him in the centre of the ceiling a monogram presenting the cardinal points of the compass,—a good suggestion, by-the-by, for country houses, where visitors are so apt to be “turned completely round,”



—he found that the columns clustered in sets of two around these points. It was then an easy step to the idea of carving upon the capitals of the columns, scenes representing geographical types of human life and activity in the different quarters of the globe.

It was a beautiful thought of Frederick Schlegel that architecture is "frozen music,"—a fancy which is realized by every beholder in the rich and delicate tracery of cathedrals dim and vast; in the clusters at Cologne, slender but strong, or in the stone lace-work of the ceiling in Henry the Seventh's chapel at Westminster. Schlegel's idea is eminently suggestive: architecture may be frozen history or geography, ethnics or theogony, according to the genius of the architect; and of this we have a distinct realization in these photographs taken directly from the carved capitals. Besides, they mark an advanced point in domestic architecture; first in the art-conception, and then in the felicitous details of subjects, drawings, and carvings.

To the architect, to the proprietor of the mansion, and to his immediate circle, the columns will be an ever-recurring pleasure: to let the world at large share this pleasure, these beautiful photographs have, at the request of a number who have seen and admired them, been made public, and committed to that holy and happy season, when kind hands are open to present gifts, and loving hearts to receive them.

Before proceeding to a detailed description, the remark may be permitted, that to the architect of to-day, all schools of architecture are in the main only historic: he is bound by no absolute pre-

scriptions, but may select the best features of all, and create new ones. It is true that to produce the same results of strength and justness of proportion, the same general characteristics must always remain; but the history of the art is a history of development. The Greeks passed successively from the massive and unornamented Doric through the Ionic to the point at which

"luxuriant, last,
The rich Corinthian spread her wanton wealth;"

and beyond that still, to a composite order, claiming greater variety, more ornament,—in short, a greater "poetic license." A study of the Gothic and Arabian schools shows also great variations from the Grecian models, in graceful forms of arch and in imitations of nature.

In the capitals before us we have pictorial features of charming effect. In the upper plate supporting the architrave, the Corinthian Doric abacus rests upon Ionic volutes, while the graceful supporters which replace the acanthus of the Composite order are distinctive geographic features of the scenes portrayed in the medallions. On each capital are four medallion pictures, representing in *mezzo-relievo* carvings the most striking scenes of human life and labors, with the peculiar geographical characteristics of each great division.

Let us begin at the far Northwest in our delineations.

I.—GREENLAND.

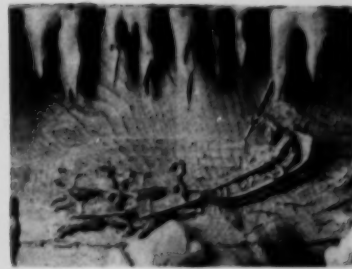
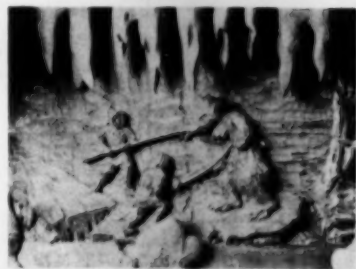
THIS capital is literally a frozen piece, a glance at which makes one shiver instinctively, and invests our more temperate clime with a new charm. Ornamenting the abacus is a walrus' head transfixed by a harpoon, the "line" of which falls gracefully over the skull. Pendant from the volutes are heavy, never-melting icicles, and rising to meet them, encircling neck and astragal, are the solid bergs, realizing Shakspeare's

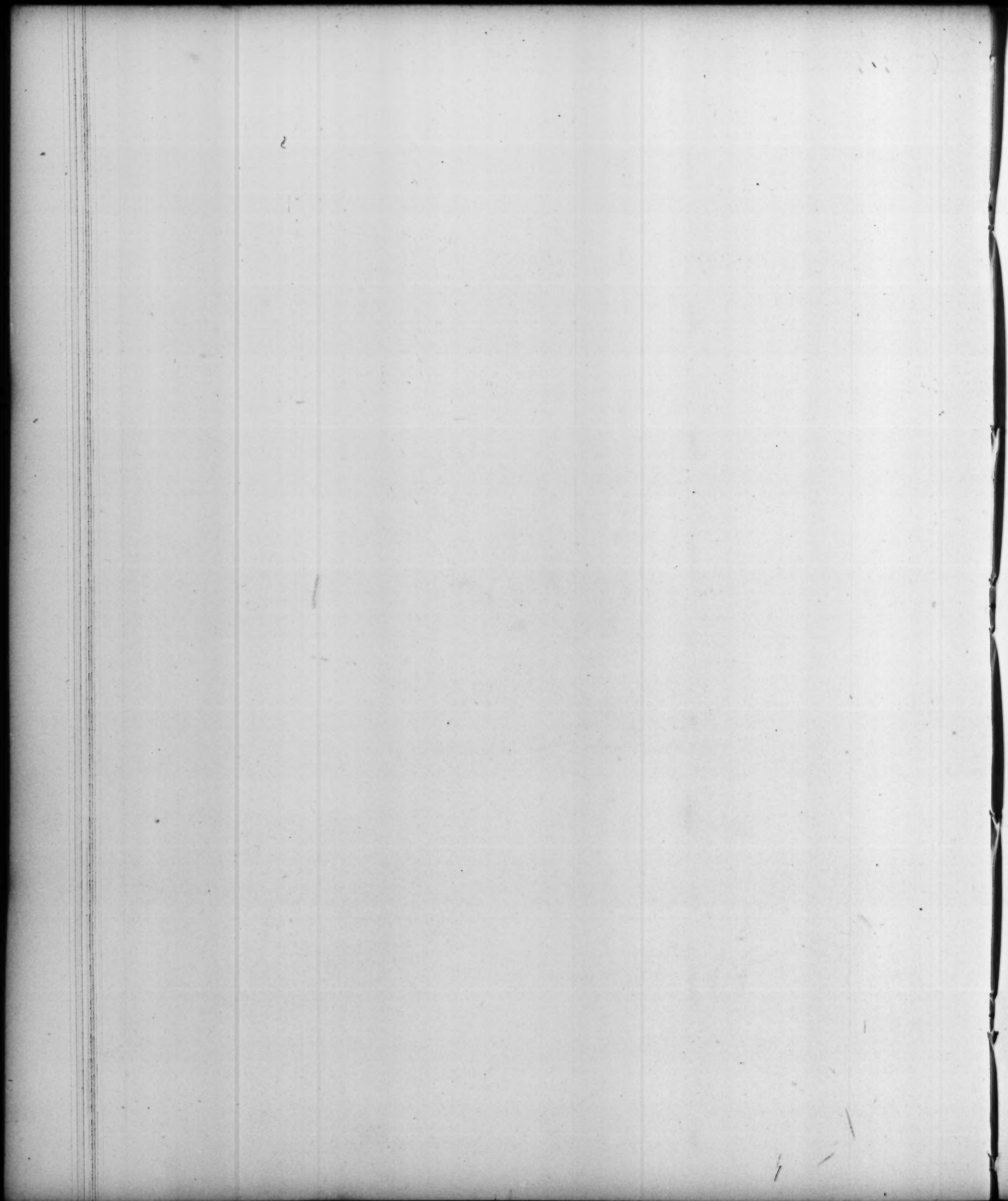
"thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice."

At the four corners of the page the medallions are presented, magnified, the more clearly to display the pictured scenes.

1. How full of life and motion is this picture! the Esquimaux dogs at full gallop, their bushy tails high in air; the driver, habitually crouching from the cold, and yet leaning forward to urge his coursers onward, shouting and plying his long whip,—a dreary ride, and a swift one, for death is in the icy air, and there is a close, warm hut at his journey's end.

2. Encased in furs, and prompted by hunger, the adventurous mariners, and the few and stunted natives, sally forth, as shown in the next upper picture, to attack the enormous walrus in his unenviable retreat: they have waged such fierce war against him that he is fast disappearing from this hemisphere. He is strong





and self-defensive, but against powder and shot he wages an unequal battle. Man makes nature feel, even in that pitiless domain, the lordship of his genius.

3. And yet there is a more powerful victim: with dauntless courage the mariner confronts the ferocious and daring polar bear, the king of Arctic beasts, as the lion is that of the tropical creation. Carnivorous only, the bear is the terror of the seal, robs the whale of its cubs, and swims a score of miles, over freezing waters, in search of his prey; and yet here the sword is at his vitals and the lance at his throat, and strength and valor and rage yield to the fortitude and skill of his human foe.

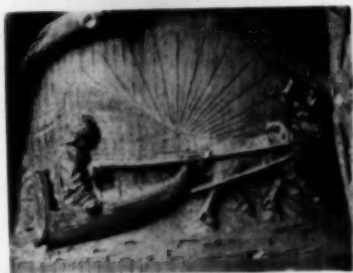
4. We have next the explorer's ship frozen in, and roofed for the long winter of cold and night. The fancy is at once borne away to the thrilling narratives of the lamented Kane and his associate, Hayes; but it cannot in its farthest flight realize the drear solitude, the burning cold, and the terrible wonders of that inhuman winter, concentrated in nature's "prison-ship," whose jailer is the frost of God, which—who may abide?

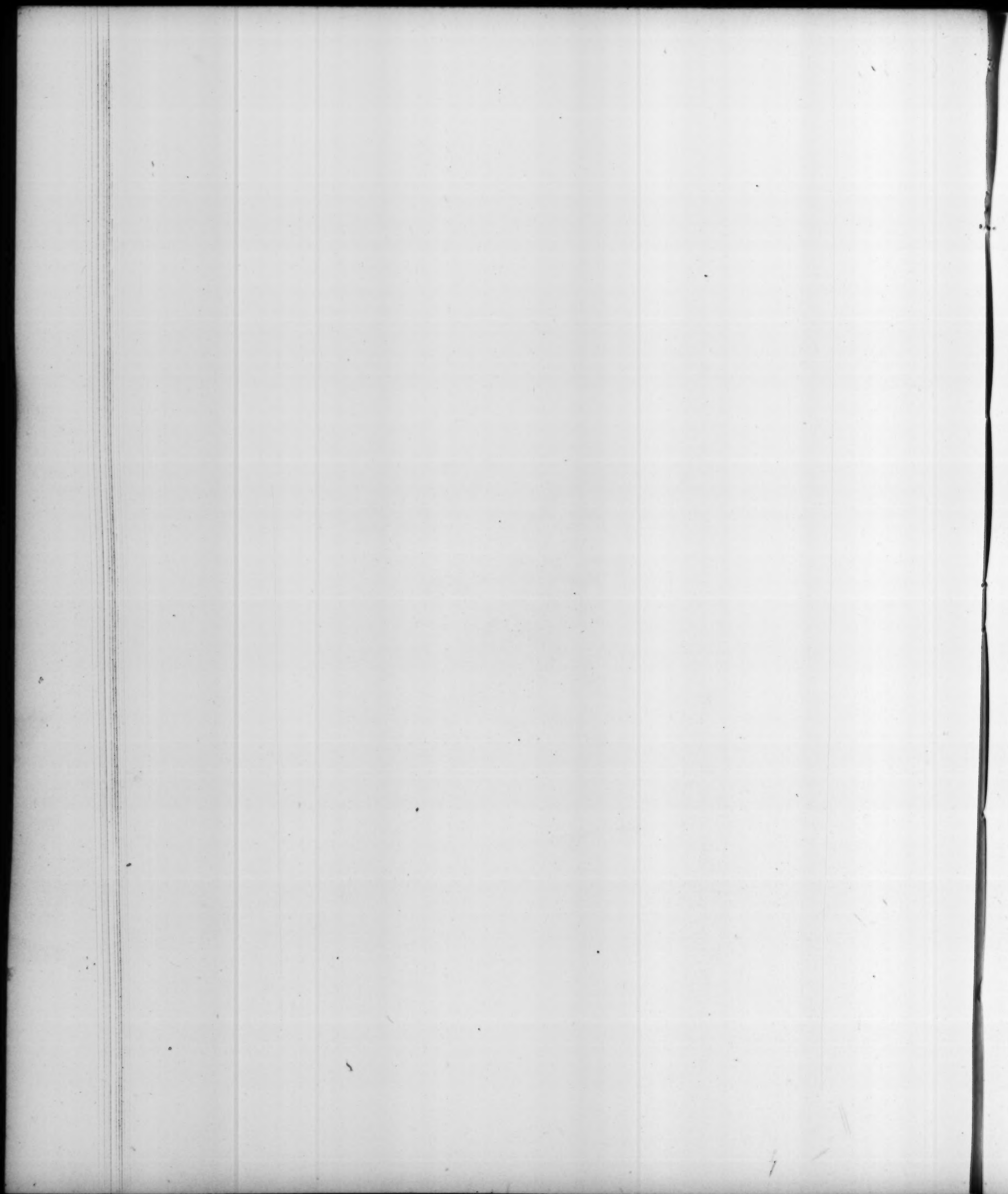
II.—LAPLAND.

AND yet we have not done with Polar scenes. Let us journey, with the second capital as our guide, past Iceland and the North Cape into the inhospitable bay which separates Nova Zembla from Lapland. Anchor, if you can, in the Varanger-Fiord, and declare that Greenland has almost its counterpart: not quite.

Here, embossed upon the abacus, instead of the walrus' skull, we have that of the reindeer, supporting the crossed arrows upon its horns. Pendent ice again appears, and bare trunks of spruce and fir support the whole, while the leaves surround the base. The medallions are in keeping, and, dreary as they are, present, on the whole, a pleasing relief from those we have just looked upon.

1. Here we have the rude hut constructed on true physical principles, small at the entrance to keep out the cold, and looking like a rough jointed bottle or carafe laid upon its side. Into this creeps the bare-breeched Lap; for let it be known that his fur dress is composed of only two garments, a shirt and a long pair of trunk hose, and these are disconnected. He is thus entirely covered when erect, but the need of protection is manifest in his present posture. His companion is waiting to follow him. How terrible must be the rigors without, to tempt humanity into such a home—dark, crowded, squalid, and odorous!





2. And yet he dares the rigors without, rigors rendered the sharper by memory of the long and extremely hot summer days, which in the farthest northern portions are three months long. Here, in his closed canoe, with sharp curved bow and stern, he dances in the surf, dexterously managing his paddles as he spears the seal for food, for clothing, and for oil. We can almost see the boat move, the muscles play, and the spear shoot forth.

3. Again he appears, quietly journeying in his rude sled drawn by his friend, benefactor, and companion, the reindeer. He is lighted by the aurora, or the ice-blink, and thus he travels on through the dreary courts of

"Winter's eternal palace built by Time."

We in these milder climes have many animals to divide the duties of serving our many wants. To him the reindeer is the horse and the cow; is used for food; his skin gives him clothing, his fibres twine, his horns many useful implements.

4. The last scene, taken from a modern narrative, represents Lapland women fishing; quiet labor which should be noticed by those who seek the extension of *Woman's Rights*: the Laplanders send this tribute, and claim membership in that sodality.

III.—ITALY.

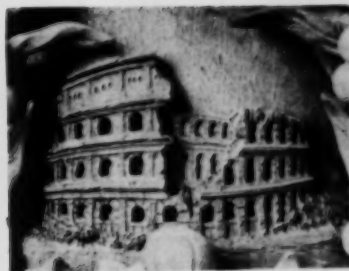
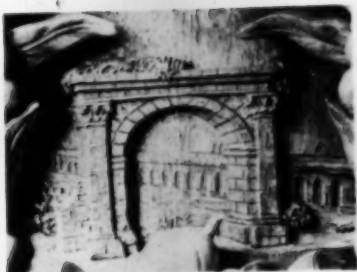
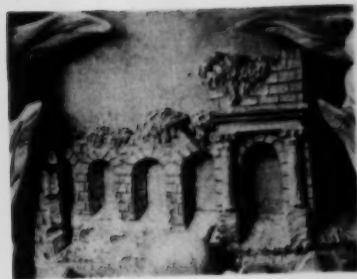
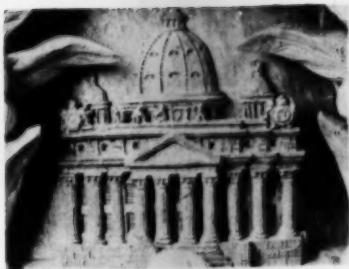
AWAY! away! with the speed of light—a change of glance, only—from ice and snow, from danger and death, to the land of perpetual spring, to balmy airs and blue waters, to the home of art, the nurse of letters:

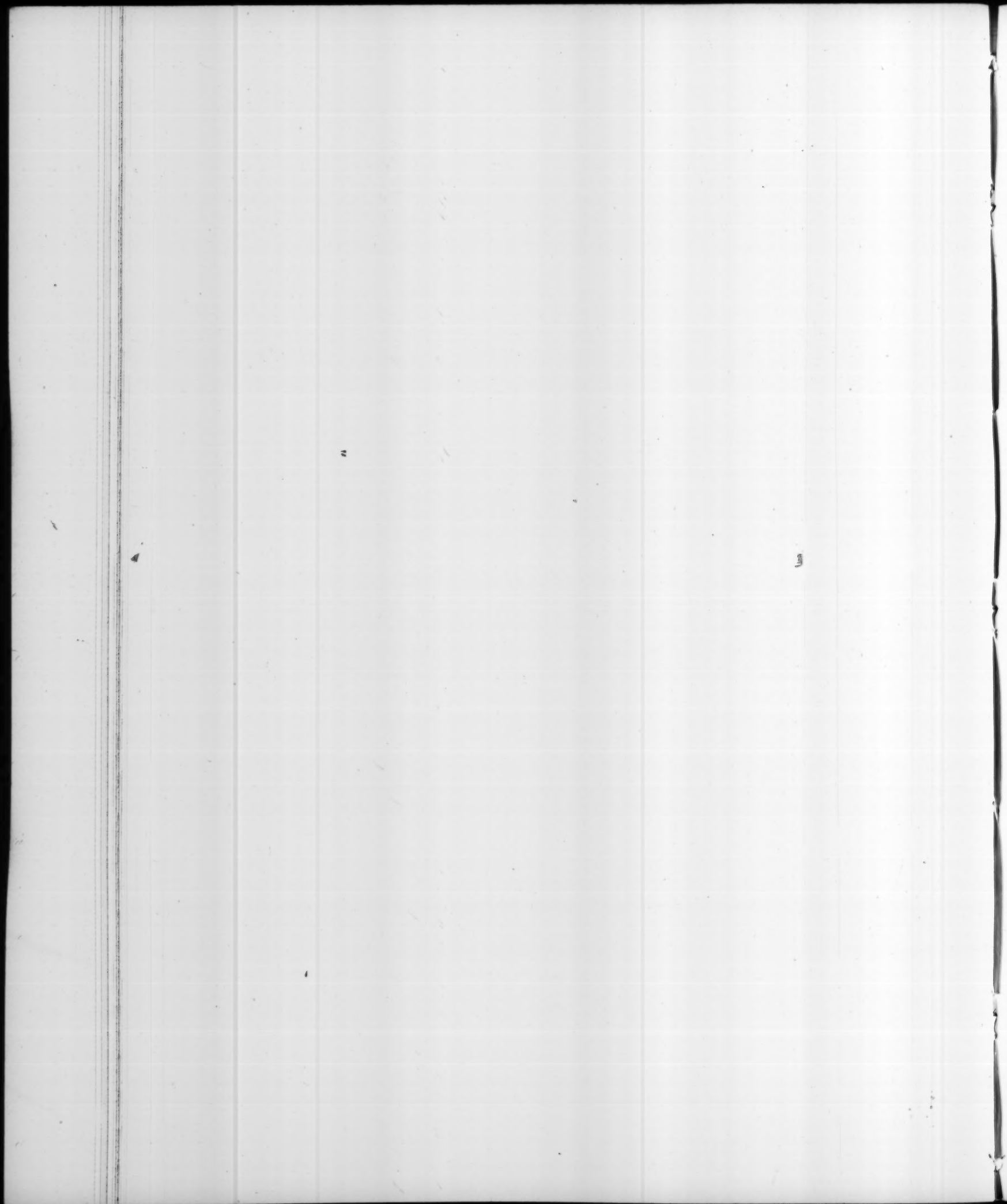
“Where clime and women seldom frown,
And life runs over sands of gold!”

From Lapland to Italy. As we gaze upon this noble capital and its embowered medallions, we throw open our coat, fling away the seal-skin cap, inflate our lungs with the Mediterranean breezes. We pluck the fig at the base; the olive clusters are so lifelike that we must pick them too. The head that adorns the abacus suggests the genius of art; the great Pan of Italian nature, the guardian of beauty, the inspirer of music; and with what an utterance do the medallions speak!

1. *Pulcherrima Roma*, and, grandest of all it contains, St. Peter's, the colossus of modern temples, architectural wonder of the world; empty even when all Italy worships there, a great landmark in past history, a grand legacy to future ages.

2. The crumbling aqueduct in the second picture declares, even in its ruins, the greatness of ancient Rome: it displays the genius and the power which deserved to conquer and rule the world, since





they also were able to civilize and ennoble the barbarians who were brought within its limits: arch and peristyle remain and yet defy the crumbling decay.

3. In the next medallion is the Arch of Constantine; a triumph amid the general decline. With the decay of art came the decay of Roman power. The emperor was great, but there was no sculptor in Rome who could build and decorate the triumphal arch, and so that of Trajan, stripped of his figures, and yet adorned with his trophies, was improvised for the occasion.

4. And last, in its awe-inspiring grandeur, stands the Coliseum, called by Merivale "the noblest existing monument of all ancient architecture." It is more; it is Roman history in stone since the day of its erection. It marks the cruelties of Vespasian, who built it by the forced labor of twelve thousand Jews and Christians; the lions of Christian martyrdom, whose cruel tearings were witnessed by one hundred thousand spectators; the gathering of the Goths, which did not harm it (it was intact at the beginning of the eighth century); the vandalism of Paul II., which took its heathen stones to build Christian temples; the Sunday services of Benedict XIV.; the enthusiasm of poet and historian. It crumbles slowly away, although untouched by modern Popes, but yet realizes the wonder of Byron:

"Arches on arches! as it were that Rome
Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
Her COLISEUM stands."

IV.—EGYPT.

ACROSS the sea, the magic capital takes us to the delta of the Nile, the bountiful benefactor of Egypt: to Egypt, the granary of the Old World, upon which all civilization had been incrustated, which was filled with art.

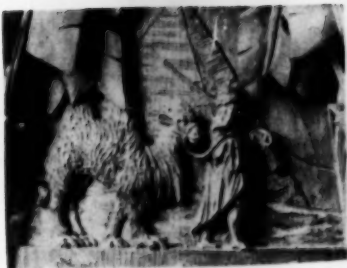
A Pharaoh's head crowns the abacus, round, cheerful, thoughtful, an eye glancing out from hoar antiquity; under the volutes cluster the date-palms, spread forth from the well-spring to beacon the traveler to living water, and at the base are the lotus leaves, which tell of

“a land

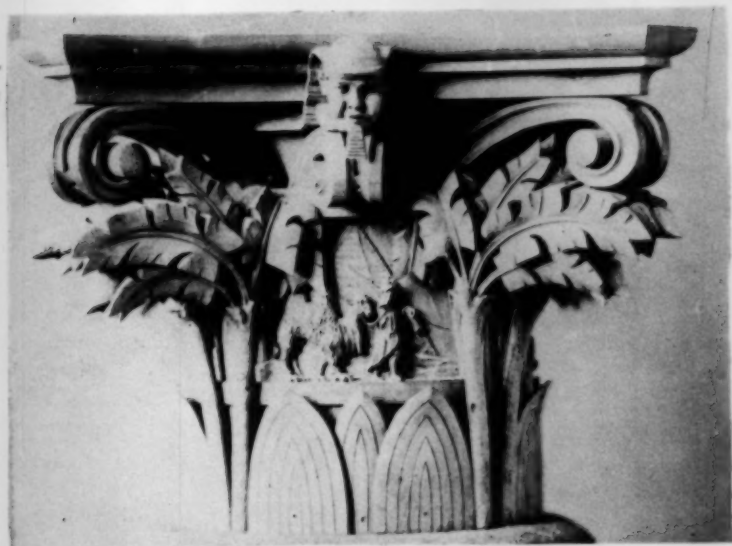
In which it seemed always afternoon.”

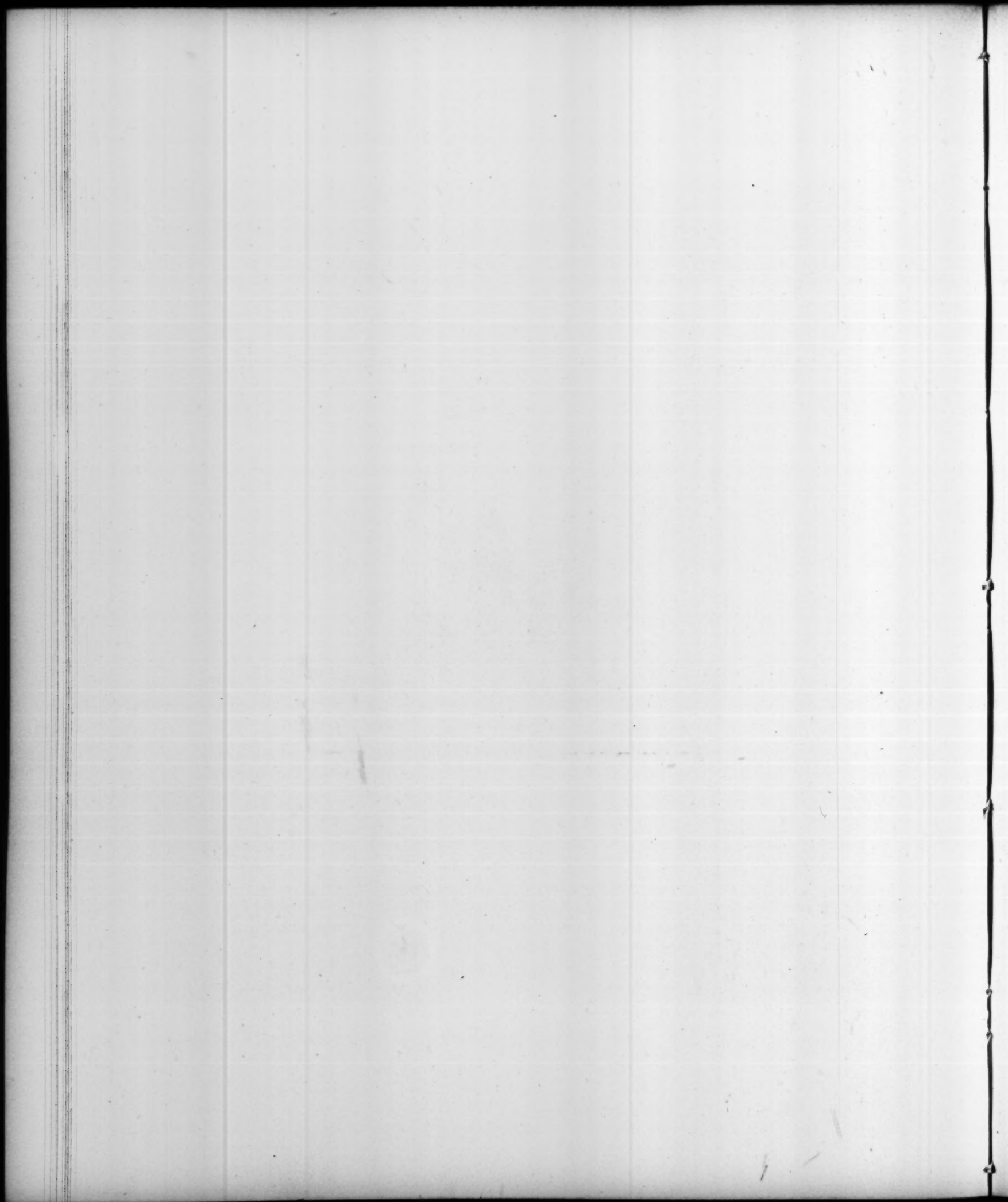
How happy an illustration of Egypt! The scene of Roman conquest, trodden by Mohammedan armies, in Egypt it has for ages been “always afternoon.” The traveler glides in lotus dreams of an early period past the Needles of Cleopatra, the Pillar of Pompey,—things of yesterday,—onward to the ruins of Thebes and Denderah, past the Sphinx and the Pyramids. He is no longer of to-day; he stands with Joseph's brethren before the insulted magnate, or with Moses at Pharaoh's footstool.

1. The first is a speaking picture; the wandering Ishmaelite leads for a space the Bactrian camel, wonderfully fleet, the hair soft and woolly, bearing the relation to the Arabian camel that the thorough-bred does to the draught-horse. A picture of self-reliance and individual power, firmly stepping man, fleet steed.



2





He passes, unheeding, the base of the great pyramid, which stands to-day in its gray antiquity in all the perfection of four thousand years ago.

2. The Sphinx, that unsolved riddle of the world: the head of disintegrating sandstone is that of a woman, while hidden beneath the accumulating desert sands is the couchant body of a lion. Between the forepaws, which extend fifty feet in length, Belzoni found a miniature temple, in front of which, facing it and gazing into the eyes of the Sphinx, was a smaller lion ready to spring. A dash of modern satire is not wanting to connect the ancient with the modern. A prying Englishman—certainly not an American!—has placed his ladder, mounted its crown, and is taking the exact phrenological measure of the *os frontis*! Thus, perhaps, the riddle will yet be read, unless the organ of secretiveness proves to be, as history already believes, extremely prominent.

3. An Egyptian temple, let us say that of the Sun at Heliopolis, the City of the Sun, where tradition tells us—and tradition has a truer aspect here than elsewhere—Moses became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and the earlier Grecian worthies drew draughts from the deepest and purest wells of ancient learning. The columns date back three thousand years before Christ, and show clearly that the Greeks derived the Doric order from Egypt.

4. Here are the temples and spires of Alexandria, that city of the great conqueror, built to draw in the resources of the world, when Egypt could yet receive and repay them.

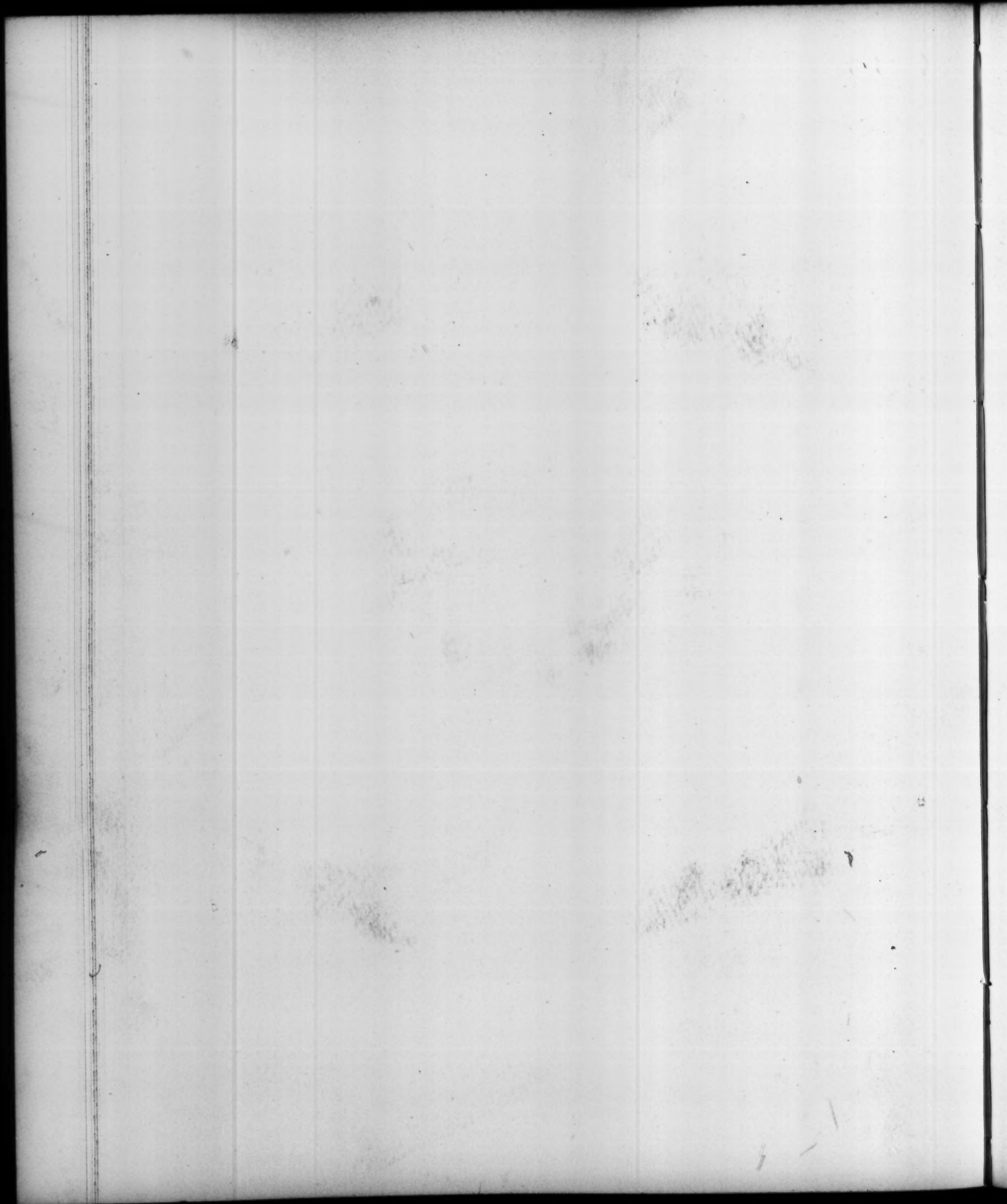
V.—INDIA.

SOUTHWARD: let us take the overland route across the Isthmus to the Red Sea, past the Straits and Aden, to India. On the abacus is the elephant's head, with its sagacious forehead and sensitive trunk. The palms, with jointed trunk and spreading branches, sick with too luxurious nourishment, curling languidly downward, are significant of nature in that hot and teeming land. The cotton-boll,—genus *herbaceum*,—short-stapled, bursting at the sides, is the emblem of fertility, and the exponent of wealth to the grasping but energetic European. India is dressed in cotton, as China is in silk.

1. An Indian temple, the Taj Mahal, or "crown of edifices," at Agra, especially historic because its dome and minarets tell of the Mohammedan conquest that swept over the land and gave a better faith and art. It is a temple and a tomb; but it is an Indian mausoleum, and is therefore the embodiment of Islam in India. Bayard Taylor calls it the perfect type of Moorish art, and adds: "If there were nothing else in India, this alone would repay the journey."

2. In the next picture the wealthy Asiatic travels upon the elephant in his richly caparisoned and gilded *howdah*, while the *mahout* sits in front on the neck of the animal, guiding and urging him by voice and goad, and slaves go before and follow after to keep away the crowd in the street.





3. The bullock-cart, surmounted by a palanquin, is, perhaps, a fair representative of travel in India. The *banghy* travels dak, *i.e.* takes the mail, rapidly; the palanquin with bearers, or the palkee-dâk, is slow, and is very uncomfortable in its motion; the bullock-cart, with its double shelter, is the usual conveyance for light travel between distant points; the bullocks are generally of the zebu, or humped breed, and trot six or eight miles an hour without fatigue and without restiveness.

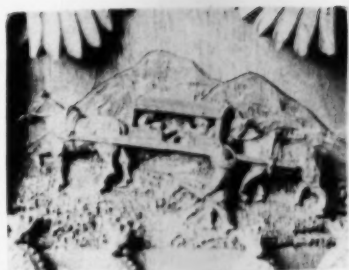
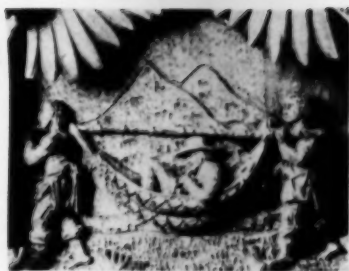
4. The solitary traveler on his camel is still found on the Indian plains; but less frequently than the howdah of the elephant, or the cart with its trotting zebus. But where water is scarce and found at long intervals, the "ship of the desert" is a surer trust than the strength of the elephant or the shelter of the cart.

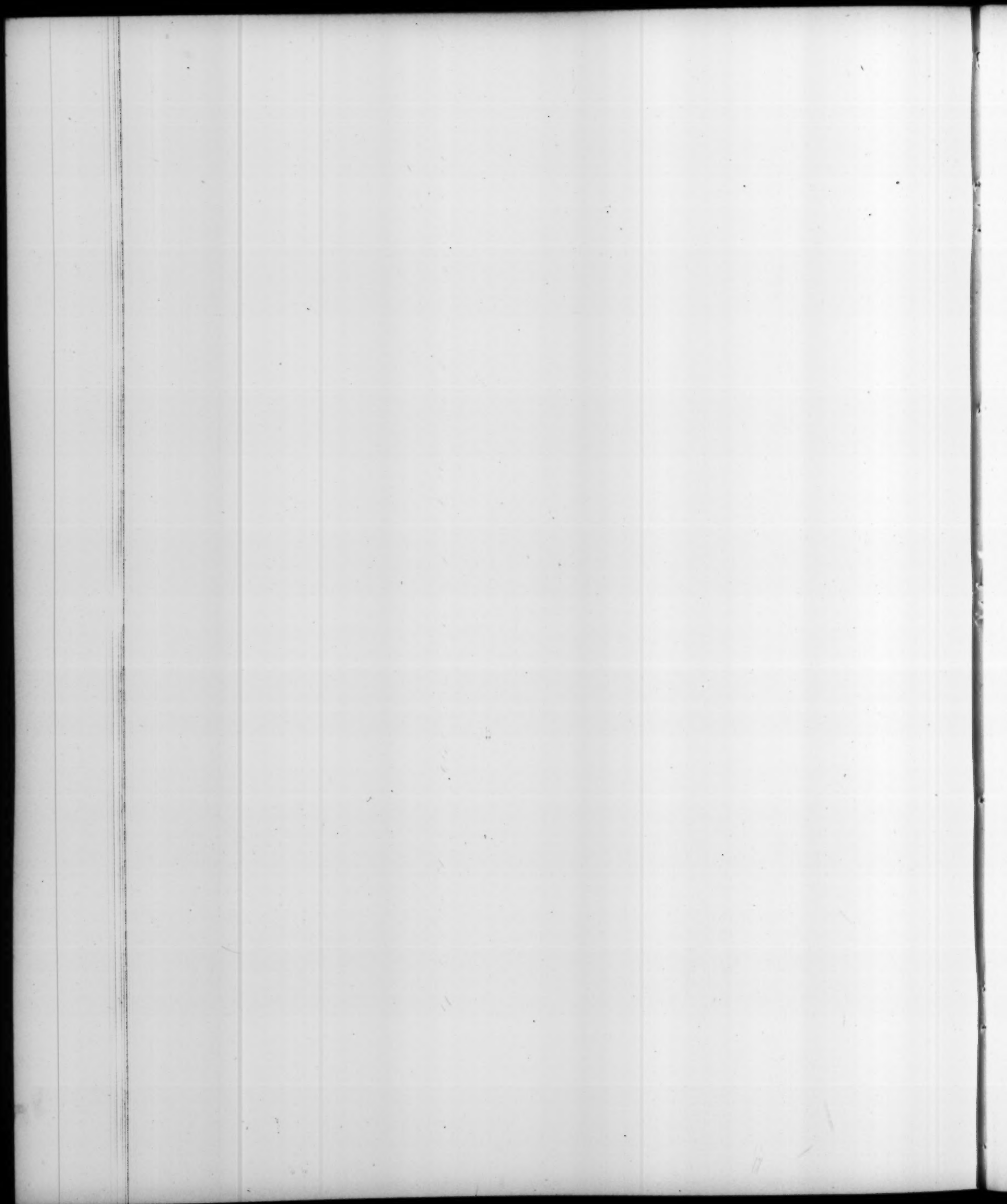
VI.—SOUTH AMERICA.

As we look back upon this capital, Fancy makes an aerial voyage, on Pacific breezes, from Madras to the sources of the Amazon. Here is another phase of tropic life. On the abacus the huge and deadly serpent twines in a graceful knot; to represent the acanthus, vigorous cacti shoot out into strong erect leaves, while the prickly pear clusters at the base; all suggestive of tangled forests, chattering monkeys, alligators and anacondas, volcanoes and earthquakes.

1. In the first medallion we have the contrast of the northern adventurer, sharp-nosed, calculating, and broad-hatted, comfortably seated in the hammock, borne along by bare-headed, stolid-faced, shoeless mestizoes, who play the part, with wonderful similarity of feature, of the four-footed beasts; mind and matter significantly represented. The face of the person in the hammock is quite a study, and is in fine contrast with his bearers.

2. With unerring aim the *gaucho*, while in full career, throws the lasso and brings down the wild bull. It is his work and his pleasure; his skill and nerve bring their own reward. The modern centaur, he never walks, but mounts his horse to cross the street; and the immense pampas, filled with vast herds of wild cattle, from the Orinoco to Patagonia, render his vocation permanent and secure.





3. We have here the modes of transporting heavy timber, slow, awkward, and in remarkable contrast with our home appliances. Indeed, the wonder is great that with everything to invite invention and progress, such clumsy constructions still remain in South America.

4. Here is the genuine mule litter, used for transporting men and stores into the roadless interior, through thick undergrowth and narrow avenues of great ferns and trailing bamboos. It is a curious thought to reach forward, not far into the future, to the day when trains of cars shall rattle over ridges and dive into tunnels, and when the banks of the Amazon, which yield four crops a year, shall be teeming with the results of the most advanced civilization.

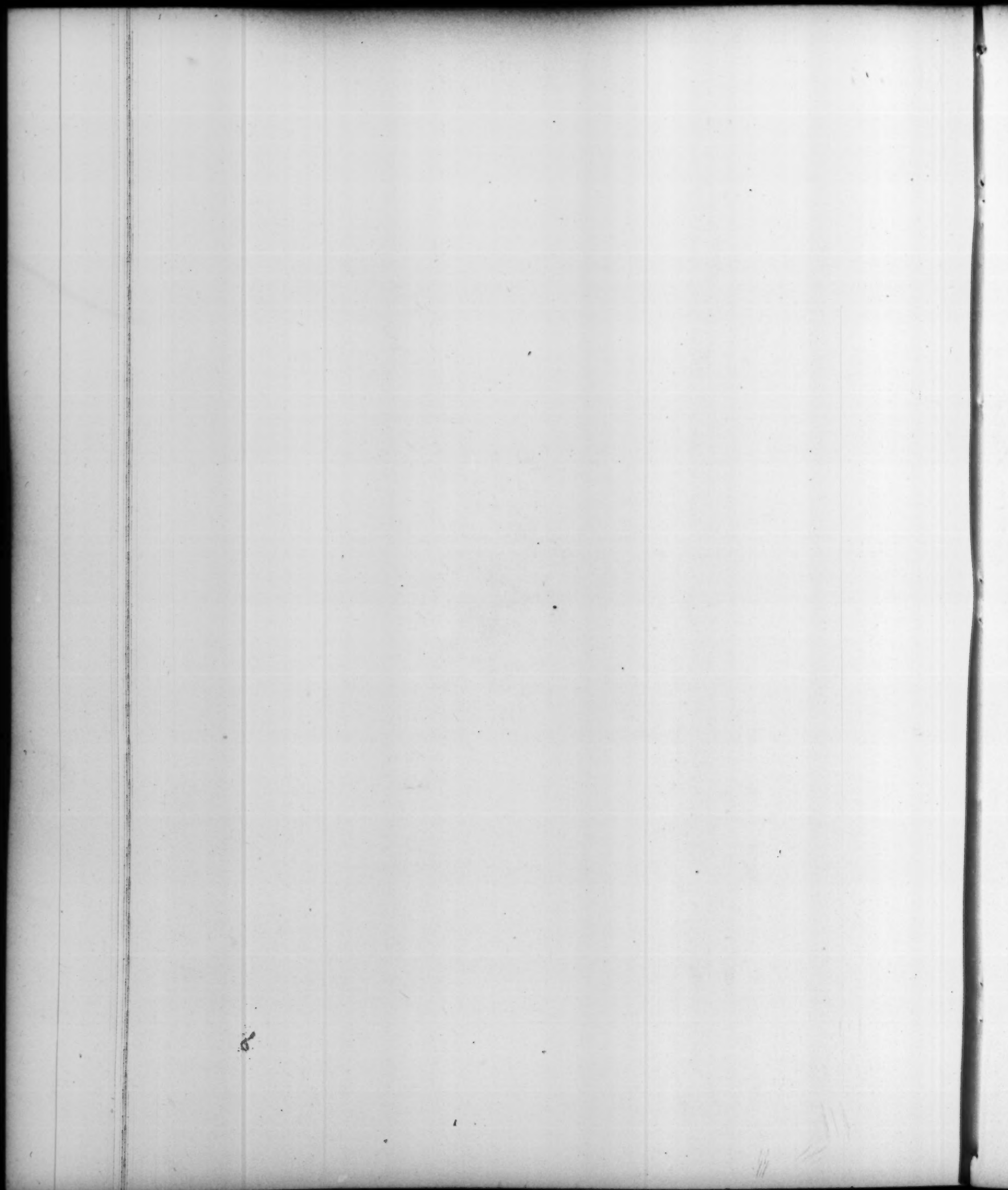
VII.—NORTH AMERICA:—INDIAN LIFE.

It was a felicitous fancy of the architect to place in fine contrast the aboriginal races, so rapidly passing away, with the country as it basks in the rays of modern civilization. In this capital we have, too, an agreeable change from the rank growths and torpid humanity of the south to the display of a ruder but healthier life. On the abacus is the head of an elk, upon the horns of which rests a portentous tomahawk. Rising acanthus-wise are pine-trees, some green and some dead, like the race whose mementos they surround. Ever green and hopeful of an eternal prosperity as they were, the coming of the white man has lopped their branches and waged against them a war of extermination; root and branch, they are doomed.

Oak leaves, with acorns, cluster at the base, suggesting the vast oak openings of western forests. The medallions are in perfect keeping, and will repay a careful examination, as distinct and well-selected types of aboriginal life.

1. Feathered in token of former valor, and ready armed to meet the foe, "Great Bear," "Soaring Eagle," and "Crouching Panther" are intent upon the words of the chief, who tells them of the coming battle, gives them orders and directions for its conduct, and excites them to bloody deeds, which shall make them honored of their fellow-braves and loved of women.





2. Behold the issue. The deed is accomplished. Examine the rude grandeur in the face of the warrior who holds aloft the reeking scalp which he has just torn from his victim's head: it is the expression of combined Indian virtues,—valor and revenge. The carver has certainly equaled the conception of the artist in the smooth, oozing head of the murdered man, as he lies across the path, no longer an obstacle, but a trophy of renown to the chief who has visited upon the pale-face the wrongs of his race.

3. Next to war, the chase claims the attention and interest of the savage; in this picture he is represented in full career in pursuit of the buffalo: the bow just about to be drawn, and an arrow sent with fatal aim through and through the huge animal.

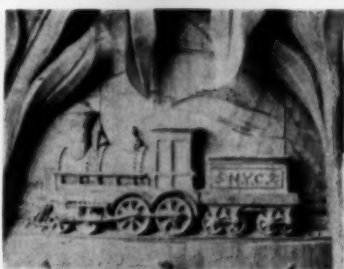
4. The story of his simple life ends with a domestic picture: after the council, the war-path, and the hunting-field, he comes to the wigwam to rest; there his squaw nurses his dusky infant, lulling its slumbers by the low chant of his father's valor and renown. All the rest is stoical and callous; here is that touch of tender nature which makes the whole world kin; home, wife, child, hold the heart-strings in the forest primeval, with just as firm a grasp as in the splendid mansions of European or American refinement.

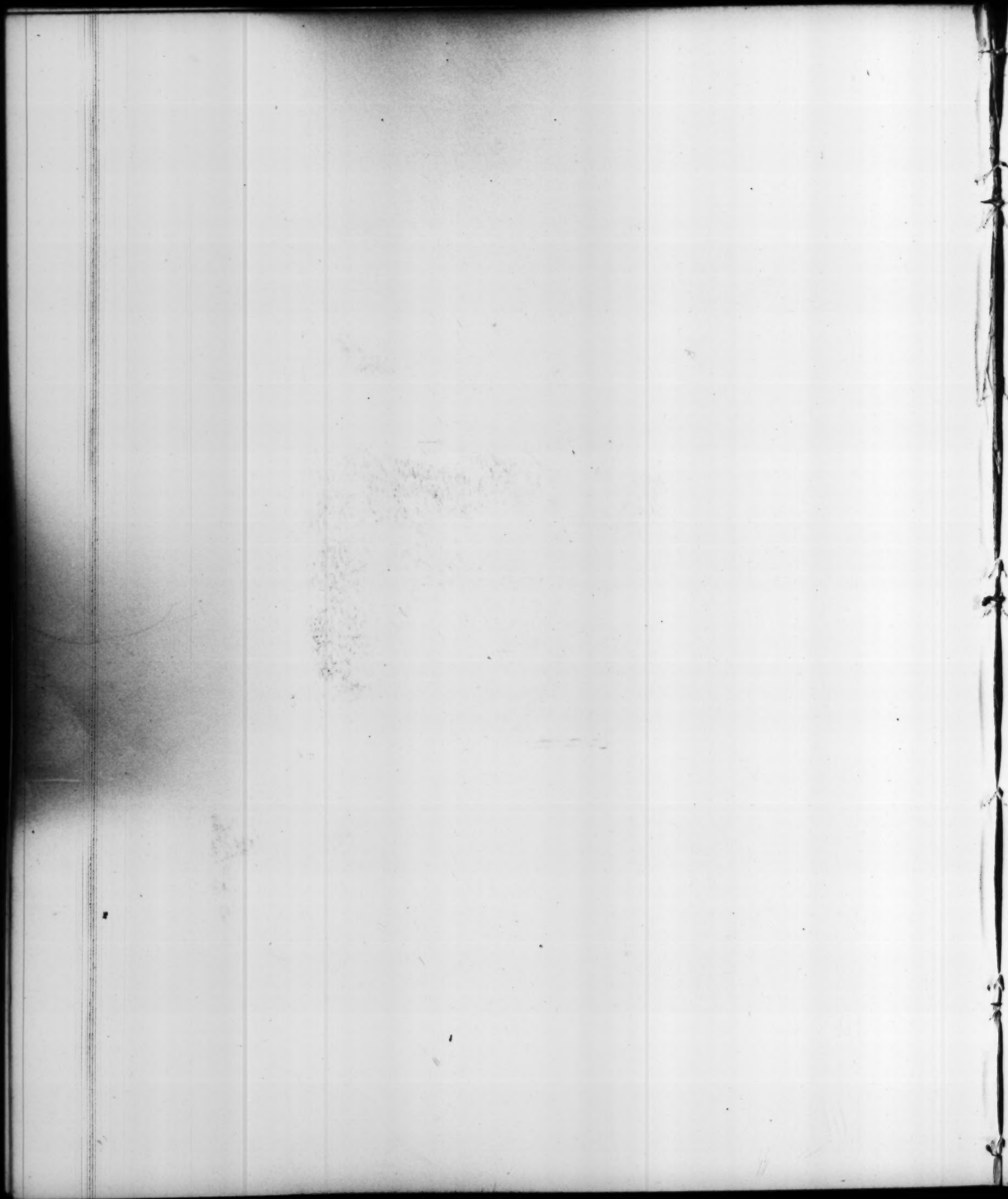
VIII.—THE UNITED STATES.

THE consideration of this beautiful capital is the most pleasing of all. We have roamed the world; with Goldsmith's Traveler, we have moralized upon "men, manners, and mountains;" there is much to admire, much to avoid. It is with rekindled patriotism that after this circumnavigation we are at home. The abacus is embossed with the implements of husbandry and the sheaf of grain; our acanthus, at once beautiful and significant, is "the full corn in the ear;" at the base are the forest leaves, chestnut and maple, suggestive of splendid forests and of building timber; of rare natural gifts and art-products of comfort and luxury. Our progress and our triumphs are well depicted in the medallion carvings.

1. Sixty years ago, the little nondescript of Fulton, believed by many to be one of Satan's progeny, puffed and labored up the Hudson, the progenitor of those floating palaces that now arouse the echoes of the Palisades and scorn the waves of Tappaan by night and day.

2. Along the banks lie the fields of Goshen and the dairies of Dutchess County, "where the milkmaid singeth blithe;" and where are found wealth of butter and wonders of cheese. The picture, too, suggests the boundless prairies, daily reclaimed, where may roam





cattle to feed a world, with grain for its bread and dairy products in proportional supply.

3. The third picture is well conceived to represent that which is emphatically the railroad country of the world. Of all purely mechanical causes, there is none more conducive to the integrity of the country than the steel network which envelops the Union everywhere, and which is stretching its magic web onward to the Pacific. By the rapid diffusion of personal intercourse and of varied products, it will tend to make us one people, until the sentiment of universal identity shall

"Feel at each thread, and live along the line."

4. It is more than pardonable—it is commendable—to magnify our success in navigation, as is designed by the yacht in the last picture of all: it marks our high adventure and enterprise on the seas, displayed in strength and swiftness of model, in iron-clads, in merchant ships, and in pleasure yachts like the *America* and the *Henrietta*.

As the imaginative Frenchman could make his journey "*autour de ma chambre*" or "*autour de mon jardin*," and be always *chez lui*; so the reader may journey around the globe in these capitals and rejoice to find himself at home. The snows of the North, the ardors of the South, the splendors of Italian art, the ancient marvels of Egypt, the luxuriance of the tropics, but bind him to his native country more; and thus the best lesson of our capitals is a lesson of contentment, of patriotism, and of unbounded hope.